

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03

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XMB-07 OPIC-12 CIEP-02 LAB-06 SIL-01 OMB-01 STR-08

INT-08 IGA-02 DRC-01 /193 W
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R 011413Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1206

INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE NEW DELHI 5813

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EGEN, EAID, IN, UR

SUBJ: SOVIETS CRITICIZE INDIAN BHILAI, BOKARO PERFORMANCE

1. IN A PRESS CONFERENCE CALLED BY SOVIET EMBASSY IN NEW DELHI APRIL 30, SOVIET ECONOMIC COUNSELOR GORDOLUPOV TOOK INDIA TO TASK FOR DELAYING EXPANSION OF BHILAI AND BOKARO STEEL PLANTS. ACCORDING TO ONE PRESS ACCOUNT, PRESS CONFERENCE WAS REACTION TO LEAKS FROM INDIAN STEEL MINISTRY TO EFFECT THAT SOVIETS ARE TO BLAME FOR BHILAI AND BOKARO TROUBLES. GORDOLUPOV SAID PLANS FOR EXPANSION OF BHILAI FROM 2.5 TO 4 MILLION TONS BY 1976 HAVE FALLEN TWO YEARS BEHIND SCHEDULE; AND SITUATION IS EVEN GLOOMIER AT BOKARO WHERE PLANNED EXPANSION WAS TO HAVE BEEN FROM 1.7 TO 7 MILLION TONS BY 1977. BUT, HE CONTINUED, REASONS FOR DELAYS ARE NOT TO BE FOUND IN SOVIET PERFORMANCE, WHICH HAS MET ALL COMMITMENTS. GORDOLUPOV WAS CRITICAL OF
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SHORTAGES OF BASIC INPUTS FOR PRO-
JECTS, INCLUDING COAL

AND POWER, AND SAID THAT FREQUENT STRIKES HAMPERED PROGRESS OF WORK. SOVIET SPECIALISTS, HE SAID, WERE WORRIED THAT CHRONIC SHORTAGES AND UNDERUTILIZATION OF CAPACITY WOULD DAMAGE EQUIPMENT ALREADY IN THE PLANTS. IN PARTICULAR, SOVIETS DOUBT THAT HEAVY MACHINE BUILDING PLANT AT RANCHI WILL BE ABLE TO DELIVER IN TIMELY FASHION THE LARGE QUANTITY OF MACHINERY IT IS COMMITTED TO SUPPLY; AND THEY QUESTION THE ABILITY OF INDIAN METALLURGICAL ENGINEERING CONSULTANTS TO COMPLETE THE MASS OF NECESSARY DESIGN WORK ON TIME.

2. IN PRIVATE CONVERSATION WITH EMBASSY OFFICERS, AN INDIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL WHO FOLLOWS EASTERN EUROPE TERMED THE SOVIET STATEMENT STEP "EXTRAORDINARY", AND HALF-LAMENTED THAT THE OPEN INDIAN SOCIETY GIVES FOREIGN DIPLOMATS EASY ACCESS TO THE PRESS FOR SUCH PURPOSES.

3. COMMENT: WHILE THE SOVIETS HAVE TAKEN THE INDIANS TO TASK PRIVATELY IN THE PAST OVER POOR PERFORMANCE OF SOVIET-AIDED PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECTS, SUCH BLUNT PUBLIC CRITICISM IS UNPRECEDENTED IN OUR RECOLLECTION. WE ASSUME THE SOVIETS HAVE ADOPTED THIS TACTIC--ADDING TO THE ABUSE CURRENTLY BEING HEAPED ON THE FALTERING INDIAN ECONOMY--OUT OF SHEER EXASPERATION AND A DESIRE TO AVOID BEING MADE SCAPEGOAT FOR TROUBLES AT BOKARO AND BHILAI.
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